

U.S. Aid Left Little Impact

Moroccans Struggle Under Independence

First of Three Articles

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RABAT, Morocco — "Were the Americans really in this country during the Second World War?" asked the young Moroccan journalist. "Oh, yes, you fought against the Germans here."

No, it was explained, the brief fighting in November, 1942, was against the Vichy French forces that controlled Morocco and opposed the first allied landings of the North African campaign.

But that was too confusing for the questioner, and it obviously didn't register. Half of Morocco's 13½ million people are under 20, and a whole generation has grown up with no direct knowledge

of the conflicts that catapulted their country into modern history and led to independence.

Half a billion dollars in economic aid and 21 years of American presence, beginning with the 1942 landings and ending with evacuation of the strategic air bases at Nouasseur and Kenitra, seem to have left little lasting impact.

Among the Western-oriented people, Americans are regarded as friends. An extraordinary fund of good will remains, thanks in part to a careful information program. Some Moroccans also lament the loss of dollars and em-

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ployment brought by the self-contained bases, for the economy is plunging.

At Moroccan request an American naval detachment still assists with communications training. Some local effort is being made to preserve runways at air bases turned over to the Moroccan government.

But weeds now cover the decaying railroad tracks along the rim of the beaches north of here where some of the 1942 landings took place. Romping youngsters are unaware of the symbolism about an era that has passed.

Fifty-three years of French presence have left much more imprint. From 1912, when Marshal Lyautey established a protectorate over Morocco, until full independence in 1951, France built a substantial administrative and commercial foundation.

Outside the former Spanish zone in the north, French is used widely to supplement Arabic. The culture is a mixture of modern French and traditional Moroccan, and some 5000 French teachers remain. Nevertheless, the continuing departure of French residents and capital aggra-

vates a serious economic predicament.

The sad fact is that independence has not brought Moroccans the good life. Whatever the other satisfactions, material conditions are little better than a decade ago. In some respects they are worse.

Economic Lag

There is little hope that the downward spiral will soon be arrested. Economic growth of about 2½ per cent annually at best has not kept pace with the 3.1 per cent population growth. Industrial production recently has declined.

On a per capita basis agricultural output is now only 76 per cent of what it was in 1955. In parts of the country there is endemic malnutrition.

Unemployment is pathetic in the great port city of Casablanca. Protest demonstrations by students this March triggered a fearful riot of general dissatisfaction. Reliable estimates place the number of dead at 600.

Causes of the decline are easy to identify. For years after the war Morocco enjoyed a false prosperity, lived it up and overspent her income.

But French capital, which flooded in between 1946 and 1954, has found more profit-

able uses at home, and other capital has not replaced it.

Apart from fears about repatriation of capital, there are complaints about corruption and inefficiency of the vast governmental bureaucracy.

Cars and motorbikes attest the beginnings of a Europeanized middle class, but extremes of wealth are great. A few old families maintain an almost feudal hold on many of the country's assets, including vast estates.

Prices have risen, and hotels and restaurants are beyond the reach of many Moroccans. A colleague and I were the only patrons in a middling good Casablanca restaurant.

Productivity Is Low

Seventy per cent of the people remain on the land, and productivity is generally low. Some mechanization has been introduced, but it is possible to drive for several hundred miles and see only four or five tractors.

Moslem traditionalism remains strong. At Karouine University in ancient Fez few concessions have been made to the demand for modern technical education, although the curriculum is more varied

at Mohammed V University in Rabat.

In cities women are becoming emancipated, but elsewhere the process is slow. Schoolgirls abandon the veil, but young women often may be seen wearing flimsy pastel colored masks — with high-heeled shoes protruding from black or gray robes.

Morocco has some important advantages in a fine network of roads, railroads and other communications. These are legacies from the French, who still contribute \$76 million a year in economic aid to the American \$20 million.

But the task of King Hassan II and the moderate government of Prime Minister Ahmed Bahnini remains to concentrate development efforts. The potential has not been unlocked.

Morocco could supply labor to countries of western Europe now short of workers. Similar moves have relieved population pressures in Spain, Portugal and Turkey. First, however, it would be necessary to overcome union objections and conclude a mobility agreement with the Common Market.

Tourism also could be expanded. Morocco has a

splendid spring and fall climate and miles of magnificent beaches. There is no reason why it could not lure more of the 14 million tourists who now visit Spain annually.

That, however, would require far more investment in hotels and motels—not of the luxury variety, but for visitors of moderate means. So far there has been no real effort along this line.

For all its agonizing problems, Morocco is a remarkably free and friendly country. One of the many appealing aspects is that debate is intensive and democratic, even if it has yet to focus on practicable remedies.